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ABSTRACT

This handbook, based on an address given by James R. Smith, a former deputy superintendent of public instruction in the California State Department of Education, describes the elements of California's strategic approach for lasting school reform. The assertion is made that lasting, positive, and major changes in schools require that state policymakers develop the capacity for reform at the local level and free people at the school site to actually conduct the reform. A strategic planning model, as an alternative to reform implemented by control, consists of the following elements: communicate a clear vision; hold people accountable for results; and provide assistance to help produce the desired results. Specific techniques of strategic planning are described: (1) visualize the whole job; (2) contrast what is wanted with what is now occurring; (3) customize descriptions of the vision for various constituencies; (4) shape the rules; (5) provide incentives; (6) target activities as close to the teacher-student interaction as possible; (7) pull on all the levers; (8) build alliances; (9) seek a statewide payoff; and (10) use data. Two figures, one of which outlines the English language arts framework, are included. (LMI)

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LEADERSHIP VERSUS CONTROL: A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO LASTING SCHOOL REFORM

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Middle Grade School State Policy Initiative

Resource Center on Educational Equity

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LEADERSHIP VERSUS CONTROL: A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO LASTING SCHOOL REFORM

James R. Smith

About the Author

At the time this address was delivered, James R. Smith was Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction in the California State Department of Education. Smith is now Senior Vice President, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 300 River Place, Suite 3600, Detroit, MI 48207.

About the Context

Smith explains a three-step model for reforming schools and offers a series of recommendations for effective strategic planning. Smith's comments, while originally directed to state education agency officials, will be of interest to any school reform leaders.

This article is drawn from a series of talks delivered to state education agency officials and others involved in a multi-state, $3.6 million grant project to improve middle schools. The three-year project, called the Middle Grade Schools State Policy Initiative, began in June 1990. The initiative is supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and administered through the Council of Chief State School Officers.

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LEADERSHIP VERSUS CONTROL: A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO LASTING SCHOOL REFORM

State Education Agencies (SEAs) are more and more often being asked to assume leadership of educational reform in their states. If they are to provide that essential leadership, I believe that they must rethink the theory and practice of intervention. All too often, state policymakers believe that they can coerce improvement by regulating and controlling. This approach seems to be based on a belief that teachers and school administrators really do know how to bring about better educational outcomes, but for some perverse reason will not. The corollary is that the state and federal policymakers really know how and will force the locals to do the right thing through regulations, monitoring, and enforcement. This is the "if we like it, require it; if we don't like it, prohibit it" school of public policy. State and federal laws are replete with examples of this mentality.

Any education reform predicated on control may produce general compliance, but widespread improvement of educational outcomes is not likely. Control is possible only at the margins. Forced compliance cannot bring about high-quality programs. Schools may be required to write plans, but no matter how detailed and elegant the planning instructions, they cannot coerce educators into implementing a thoughtful, effective program. Schools can be required to spend money legally but not necessarily intelligently. The best we can hope for is

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minimal compliance -- the least common denominator. Unfortunately our compulsion to control tends to stifle initiative and to prevent all but the most dedicated educators from educating as well as they know how.

Until leaders at the state level come to view their role as (1) developing capacity for reform at the local level and (2) freeing people at the school site to actually do the reform, we are unlikely to have any lasting, major, positive changes in schools. We should no longer expect that we can transform schools through some alchemy of forms, regulation, and exhortation.

Some rethinking of approaches to planning and intervention has proven effective in California. What I have to say will be based on my experience in California. In doing so, I do not mean to imply that in California we have discovered all the answers. We have not even discovered all the questions, nor do we always practice what we preach. In many instances, we are more like the fabled farmer who "only farms half as good as he knows how already." Nonetheless, we have had some experience with strategic planning for school reform, and we have had some amount of success.

These points on strategic planning are not particularly profound or new. But in state agencies and organizations, knowing about a course or direction and actually practicing it are two quite different matters. I am aware of many projects and programs that suffered and even failed because they were not strategic in their design or implementation.

Why Strategy Counts

Any project is unlikely to have a lasting effect unless it is explicitly connected to an overall plan for improving schools. One reason is that widespread, enduring changes rarely occur spontaneously. Systematic impact virtually always requires leadership and system-wide change. It

follows that positive, lasting changes are not likely to happen at the grass roots level without the state education agency playing a major role.

A second rationale for strategic planning stems from the fact that state departments of education in every state operate in very complex -- and sometimes hostile -- environments, both politically and fiscally. They therefore have constraints on their ability to provide incentives, sanctions, and rewards. If the state has a strategic plan, however, education leaders are less vulnerable to external forces.

A third reason to have a plan is that you are likely to spend money more effectively. No SEA has enough money to do everything it would like to do. But with the techniques that I will describe, you will find more money, you will find better ways to use the money that you have, and when you get new money, you will know how best to spend it. When you spot a new funding source, you will be prepared to say, "Aha! I know where that fits. I know how to bring it to bear on the problems that I already know I have." You will not be tempted to create something new just to spend the money.

A fourth reason to formulate a strategic plan is that it can work. If the SEA sees change as its mission, believes that such a mission is both possible and right, and makes the most of its ability to motivate and influence, changes will come about in local education agencies. Local education agencies (LEAs) do pay attention to the SEA.

A Model for Change

There is a very effective strategic planning model that constitutes a viable alternative to control. The model is simple. It has only three parts:

Communicate a clear vision for change,

Hold people accountable for results, and

Provide assistance to help produce the desired results.

As simple as these steps are, I have found that bureaucrats at both district and state levels are inclined to make it complex. They get bogged down in endless arguments on extraneous questions: What is a goal? What is an objective? How many objectives should there be per goal? What is the difference between a goal and a mission?

Virtually all prescriptive planning models are nonsense. The model I propose is a simple idea. You only need to be clear about what you want, keep score based on what you want, and help people accomplish what you want.

There is, however, more to say on each step of the model:

On vision. To bring about change, the first thing that you have to do is *believe* that causing change is your job. Often I see plans or hear of strategies that cast the SEA in a passive role. If you are going to bring about change, you need to think of yourself as a key player, an activist, a change agent. Otherwise you will not be effective.

You must also believe in a vision for change, such as that described in the middle school reform report, *Turning Points*. Your mission is to do whatever you have to do to bring about that vision.

We all share a responsibility for a lack of commitment to our visions. In schools, for example, we perennially set goals that we do not believe in and essentially ignore. Every school that I have ever been in has a goal something like: "Every student can learn, and every student will have a high-quality instructional program." All the same, they track students, and the students in the low track are subjected to skill and drill and rote instruction that belie any goal asserting that all kids can learn and that we have high expectations for all students.

Once you truly believe, however, that you are a key player and that whatever you have to do is what you are going to do, you must understand, *really* understand, all the particulars of the change that you want to

bring about. In short, you have to be an expert on the subject. If you are to ask other people to implement an innovation, you had better understand it at least as well as you expect them to understand it.

SEAs typically violate this principle. In most state agencies, it is common to put a generic bureaucrat in charge of a particular project. Often the person has little related content knowledge. The absence of pertinent and detailed understanding of relevant curriculum and instruction seems to be the primary source of the forms, regulations, and exhortation for which we are so notorious.

A lack of expertise also makes it difficult to carry out another required function: to communicate the vision at an optimal level of detail, one that is not so minutely elaborated as to be prescriptive, but that is specific enough to be meaningful to the people who have to implement the change.

If you say to a teacher or principal, "You have to have a thinking curriculum," your ambiguity has just created another problem for that person. If they knew what a thinking curriculum was, chances are that they would already have implemented it. Or perhaps they mistakenly think that they *are* already doing it.

To ensure understanding and effective communication of the vision, we must be quite explicit about what is expected and how it differs from less effective practices. We have to use concrete terms that mean something in the daily lives of line educators. We have to say something like, "You should phase out basal readers and workbooks. Begin to replace them with high-quality children's literature such as myths, fables, and folk stories, and here are some techniques for developing literacy using this content." This, of course, oversimplifies the matter. It is essential to include the supporting research and theory and provide empirical evidence of the efficacy of the proposed change.

A tricky part of conveying vision from the state level is being specific enough for clarity without being prescriptive. Our prescription detracts from teacher creativity, infringes on local discretion, and elicits defensiveness at the local level. We have to approach change in a collegial way. We have to work *with* teachers and help them see the opportunities and the benefits that accrue to students from changes we are advocating.

A tricky part of conveying vision from the state level is being specific enough for clarity without being prescriptive.

In California, we use curriculum and instruction -- as expressed in curriculum frameworks -- to convey our vision. This way of communicating with schools is altogether appropriate because curriculum and instruction are the fundamental issues that teachers and school administrators have to resolve. They are the *lingua franca* of education.

The frameworks we adopt and publish reflect a professional consensus about what is important to be taught and learned. We adopt them in art, mathematics, history/social studies, English language arts, science, foreign languages, physical education, and health. We believe that it is through the content and methodology of these subjects that all important educational outcomes are achieved, and we believe that every student has a right to such a high-quality curriculum.

Our approach addresses one way that we have typically gone wrong. It is all too common to add to the core curriculum every time there is a perceived weakness in it, rather than revising it to take advantage of its inherent strengths. Separate curriculum for critical thinking or values development are good examples. If critical thinking is not being developed in the teaching of science, history, and mathematics, or if values are not being taught for that matter, then both the content and teaching

methodology of those courses are suspect. We already have a curriculum in place, and if it is not teaching everything that we believe is essential -- which it typically is not -- then we need to change the content and methodology within the core curriculum. The core curriculum should be the curriculum. If the core program that a student experiences is inadequate, no amount of special programs will compensate for the deficiency. We do not need add-ons. We need to do a better job of teaching existing subjects. And we need to do a better job teaching them to all students. Poor children, children with limited English proficiency, and children with other special needs all have a right to the same core curriculum.

Almost any new topic can be hooked into what we already teach. For instance, in middle schools, literature is a perfect way to reach adolescent students. What better way is there to put middle school students in touch with the social and emotional issues of their stage of life than to expose them to their age mates in *Romeo and Juliet*? The same is true of science. Middle school kids are past the dinosaur stage. Instead, they are preoccupied with physical changes they are experiencing. Consequently, middle school is the time to talk to them about biology, not earth science.

We think that in California, we took the right path to deciding on appropriate curriculum and instruction. We in the SEA did not just cook up curriculum ourselves. We did not just decide to write some curriculum frameworks or study guides or to promulgate curriculum based on our notion of it. What the California State Department of Education did do was work with the leadership (both researchers and practitioners) in each of the curricular areas to develop frameworks that captured a consensus of the professional leadership of what constitutes an optimal program in each discipline. We asked leaders in mathematics, for instance, to describe the

best mathematics programs. What is the content? What kind of instruction works best?

As a consequence, we are confident that what we are promulgating is state-of-the-art. Is it exactly right? No, it evolves, but in every way it is preferable to what presently exists in most schools, textbooks, and tests.

The curriculum frameworks clearly express the vision of how a high-quality program in a subject area should operate. They provide advice on some ways to teach the subject, though they are not prescriptive in terms of methodology. In fact, the frameworks themselves are not particularly useful to classroom teachers. They are primarily used for guiding general policy: for selecting textbooks, developing district curriculum, and providing the basis for statewide testing and staff development activities.

One common trait of the various frameworks is that each takes a clearly defined stand on content. For example, the history/social science framework views history as the primary social science, recommends that it be taught as a story well told, and emphasizes depth over coverage. The English language arts framework unambiguously advocates a literature-based, integrated program. Figure 1 (page 9), which is drawn from the English language arts framework, shows our distinct preference for a literature-based program.

Previous experience with less specific documents was consistently disappointing. We followed the very common practice of appointing a committee which was representative of the general population of educators rather than a committee of the leaders of a particular curricular discipline. Because such committees rarely had a vision, they most often memorialized the *status quo*. They would focus on minimizing conflict and attempt to accommodate all points of view. The resultant document did not convey a vision. As a consequence, local educators were able to

Comparison of Features in Effective and Ineffective English-Language Arts Program

Effective Features *The framework calls for ...*	**Ineffective Features** *Rather than for ...*
A literature-based program that encourages reading and exposes all students, including those whose primary language is not English, to significantly literary works.	A skill-based program that uses brief, unfocused narratives and work sheets lacking meaningful content or that constructed to teach independent skills in isolation.
Attention to values in literature that reflects the real dilemmas faced by all human beings and that represents traditional and modern classics across all the disciplines.	Superficial treatment of values in *safe*, diluted or sterile texts dealing with trivial subjects or condescending themes.
Instructional programs that emphasize the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and the teaching of language skills in meaningful context.	Instructional programs that focus on only one of the language arts at a time, such as reading without purposeful writing, discussing, and listening.
Instructional programs that guide all students through a range of thinking processes as they study context and focus on aesthetic, ethical, and cultural issues.	Instructional programs that limit some students, such as the less-prepared or limited-English-proficient, to work sheets and activities and activities addressing only low-level cognitive skills.
A systemic kindergarten through grade twelve developmental language arts programs articulated and implemented at all grade levels.	A fragmented curriculum having little continuity from grade to grade or school to school.
A writing program that includes attention to the various stages of the writing process - from prewriting through postwriting and from fluency and content through form and correctness.	A writing program in which students are merely assigned low-level task and papers are read only for corrections.

FIGURE 1

say they were already doing it. Documents of this nature are all too common and are almost totally ineffective.

Thus we make our frameworks more clear-cut. We accept the inevitable tension between clarity and being overly prescriptive. We err on one side or the other from time to time, but we prefer this minor problem to the previous lack of vision and failure to communicate.

Not everyone is eager to change their programs and many would rather rationalize why change is not for them. Besides "We're already doing it," the other facile responses we typically hear are, "It's too hard," or "We implemented the framework this year. It was easy." The rejoinder to the first is, "Yes, it's hard, but it's not too hard. Others with similar problems and resources have done it." It is a little more difficult to respond to the second, but it is highly suspect. Our experience has shown that quick, effortless adoption is a good sign that the framework is being implemented superficially. It may not be too hard, but it is not easy. It does require significant effort.

Every time I explain these ideas to people from other SEAs, I get one other objection, "But we are a local control state!" Believe me, California is a local control state, too. What I am describing is not the state of California imposing curriculum on local school districts. The SEA is simply exercising an appropriate and much neglected leadership function.

Not only is it appropriate, we have found it welcomed by teachers and other local educators. It is the role they want SEAs to play. LEAs rarely have the resources, personnel, time, or money to keep abreast of state-of-the-art practice, so they appreciate the support and leadership from the state level. Moreover, they would much rather we spend our resources on substance rather than checking to make sure that the Chapter 1 ditto machine is properly labeled.

When we started developing the frameworks, we did get some resistance, often from school board members. A response (which often worked) was to inquire "What in this framework should not be taught to students in this district?" At that point, most resistance collapsed, probably because few of the naysayers had even read the frameworks. Even those who had read the document, however, would admit to finding nothing really wrong with it. They just did not think the state should develop framework. Even this modest level of resistance has all but disappeared.

On accountability. The question is not whether educators should be held accountable. They are already held accountable in a variety of ways. The real question is -- accountable for what? There need to be unambiguous consequences for success or failure to achieve the desired outcomes consistent with the vision. There are a variety of accountability indicators: test scores, dropout rates, attendance rates, and so on.

We know from considerable experience that chronic failure is not a sufficient consequence for most schools to motivate them to improve or for LEAs to impose changes aimed at improvement. There are schools that have been, by any measure, failing for several years. They know that they are failing, or at least they have a pretty good idea that they are failing. As long as nobody does anything about it, however, they are not sufficiently motivated to make changes.

Bill Honig, California state superintendent, annually takes action aimed at directly providing motivation and incentive to improve a select group of such schools. Every year when the California Assessment Program (CAP) scores are released, he identifies the 30 worst-performing schools. He calls the superintendents of those schools' districts and asks them if they realize that in their district is one or more of the worst performing schools in the state. He further inquires why and what they

plan to do about it. Those phone calls (bear in mind the state superintendent has no power to *require* any action) have had a demonstrable effect. Often the faltering schools have new principals the following year. In these cases chronic failures carried consequences, even if they were not direct. LEAs do pay attention to the SEA, even in local control states.

The California Department of Education gets a lot of complaints about publishing test scores in the newspapers, but in most communities, that, too, has a motivating effect. Parents and other members of the public questioning low test scores is a consequence to be avoided in many communities.

Since state-imposed accountability measures are a powerful way to gain the attention of local educators, it is very important that what you hold them accountable for is consistent with your vision. How you keep score determines what people pay attention to. If people are held accountable for filling out forms, they will pay attention to completing forms. Our most frequent mistake with regard to accountability is that what we hold people accountable for is often inconsistent with our vision. We send conflicting messages about what we want. We say, for instance, that we want achievement, and then we reward bureaucratic compliance.

How you keep score determines what people pay attention to. If people are held accountable for filling out forms, they will pay attention to completing forms

Assessment is the classic example of sending conflicting messages. A case in point is Chapter 1. Federal authorities say they want LEAs to develop higher-order thinking in Chapter 1 students and then they measure success according to norm-referenced tests that do not measure higher-order thinking and learning. So what do Chapter 1 educators in the

schools listen to? If you guessed the tests on which score is kept, you are right. Should anyone be surprised that instruction in Chapter 1 programs is often rote skill and drill aimed at boosting scores on norm-referenced tests rather than increasing actual learning?

Assessment affects the general curriculum as well. I can guarantee that if you have a very good framework that describes a high-quality curriculum, and you evaluate educators' performance with a very bad test, what will be taught is the test, no matter how much teachers would like to teach the curriculum in the framework.

In California, we have had an interesting illustration of this dynamic, and it shows what a negative influence tests can have on instruction. In our statewide assessment program, we used a multiple-choice test to measure the ability to write. The test was actually pretty indicative -- scores correlated very highly (about .8) with students' ability to write. As we very carefully and accurately tracked writing scores in California, we saw that they were declining consistently year after year. After some study, we found that the main reason for the decline was that students were not writing. Teachers were not about to assign essays when they knew that their students were going to be evaluated by multiple-choice tests.

We instituted eighth- and twelfth-grade writing samples in the California Assessment Program (CAP) tests, and the results were phenomenal. The National Center for the Study of Teaching of Writing at the University of California at Berkeley did a study a few years ago of teachers of eighth and twelfth grades. They asked questions like, "Do you teach more writing than you did two years ago? Do you teach more kinds of writing?" The answer overwhelmingly was, "Yes." And overwhelmingly, the reason given was the California Assessment Program (CAP).

One other warning on accountability: beware of building in perverse incentives. Let me take an example of a perverse incentive from the classic wall chart idea. We annually produce a profile for each California high school. It reports, among many other indicators, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, but unlike the wall chart it does not report *average* SAT scores. Along with average SAT scores comes a perverse incentive: the easiest way for a school to raise its average SAT score is to lower the number of test-takers. Therefore, we report the *numbers* of students scoring over certain levels, e.g., the number of students at the school who scored 900 or above. As a result, many more students are taking the tests, and the scores are going up.

We have observed an interesting anomaly, though. The statewide average SAT score has been flat or gone down in the last couple of years, but scores in every single subgroup have gone up. Black students' average score has gone up. The score for Hispanic students has gone up. White students' score has gone up. Every group's average score has gone up, but the overall average has gone down because more students scoring at the lower levels are taking the SAT.

Newspapers report "Bad News! Scores down!" but that is baloney! It is great news. The scores are going up, and an ever larger, ever more diverse population of students is taking the test.

On providing assistance. I believe that virtually all teachers and administrators are doing the best job that they know how. If they knew a better way, they would do it. If you subscribe to this premise it should be obvious that neither communicating the vision well nor implementing a foolproof accountability system, alone or in combination, will be sufficient to bring about significant improvement. So as change agents, it is your job to provide teachers the wherewithal to do their jobs better.

This element is the least well-developed and most frequently overlooked because in absolute terms, it is quite expensive. Even so, relative to the overall cost of public schools and compared to the typical investment that successful private sector firms make in training, it is a quite reasonable investment. Even if providing assistance was twice as costly, it would be necessary to make good on our promise to reform schools. Without this investment all the money we spend on frameworks and tests will yield disappointing results. The best we can promise is marginal improvements of the *status quo*. Clearly we will not deliver the world-class educational system we need to compete internationally and that the young people of this country deserve without deliberate assistance aimed at helping educators do a better job.

Actually, some forms of assistance are low-cost or free. They just take some thought and will. What can be done, though usually is not, is figuring out ways to remove obstacles. I have visited schools where the reason given as to why curriculum is not articulated between grade levels is that the bus schedule made it impossible for teachers to meet. Or, mathematics teachers could not meet to plan their program because of staggered preparation periods. Such obstacles can be overcome and are in schools where there is a vision of good education and a will to deliver it. Schedules are modified to accommodate the academic program, not vice versa, in schools where academic achievement is the vision.

Few existing textbooks are consistent with the hands-on, thinking curriculum advocated by the California frameworks. Our SEA has invested a lot of time and other resources attempting to improve textbooks and remove the obstacles they imply. This has not been easy. Textbooks have much in common with prime-time television. The books are all similar for the same reasons television shows are so alike. They tend to be vacuous for the same reasons. Television producers and textbook

publishers want to sell to the widest possible market and therefore appeal to the least common denominator.

Our efforts to upgrade textbooks has not made us popular in all quarters. Textbook publishers in particular resent our challenge to their ability to sell educators what is most profitable rather than that which makes most sense for students. I have no problem with publishers making a profit; but we should not subsidize and protect a superannuated industry which is unwilling or unable to deliver the product we need. Publishers seem to prefer to continue to use their 1920's technology to print hundreds of thousands of the exact same innocuous textbook to be sold across the entire country. The technology exists today for publishers to economically custom-produce textbooks in relatively small quantities.

Textbook adoption states have leverage to demand changes in textbooks, but even in non-adoption states, SEAs can influence publishers via staff development. Training can help teachers on adoption committees search for the best textbooks. Sophisticated, discriminating teachers will demand textbooks that are consistent with their curriculum. The academic program should dictate the content of textbooks, not vice versa.

An essential and probably the most powerful form of assistance for change is professional development. Unfortunately much of what passes for professional development, or training, is not particularly effective. In many cases it is a waste of money and teachers' time. To be effective, professional development has to be much more than hit-and-run training. You cannot put a road show together, stage a three-hour or even a three-day workshop, and effect a substantial change in teacher behavior in the classroom. Changing one's way of teaching is very complex and challenging.

We have found that getting a substantive change in teacher behavior requires a minimum of a three- to six-week summer institute plus follow-up and support during the year for the next two or three years. The follow-up is necessary because when teachers try something new, it does not always work. They need support to help figure out what is working, what is not working and how others are approaching similar problems. Group problem-solving and support is as important and essential to enduring change as the summer institute.

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The cost to conduct a summer institute plus follow-up is approximately $4,000 per teacher. That may seem expensive. On the other hand, we spend huge amounts of money on one-day, one-shot workshops that yield no lasting educational benefit. It would be better to pool that money and invest it in real professional development. Focus scarce resources on high-payoff professional development for only as many teachers as you can afford each year rather than settle for superficial coverage of all teachers in a single year. Set priorities and plan to train all teachers over several years.

Besides being *sustained*, professional development has to be *subject-matter specific*. Generic teaching skills do not transfer to specific subjects. Providing teachers with generic teaching skills does not solve a problem for them; it gives them the problem of figuring how to apply those skills in a specific context. Teachers do not teach generic skills. They teach kids at a particular grade level, and they teach subjects, like arithmetic, reading, and writing. Before generic skills can be useful,

teachers must adapt and apply them to specific situations in their classrooms. This task is very difficult, especially when undertaken solo. The frequent failure to accomplish the conversion from generic to specific accounts for the disappointing results from most staff development initiatives.

In California, subject-matter projects comprise the flagship of our professional development fleet. We have established the California Math Project, California Science Project, and so on. The programs (administered by the University of California, California State University, and the State Department of Education) are all patterned after the Bay Area Writing Project.

All the projects operate in pretty much the same way, which is to say, a very collegial way. Expert teachers come together with teachers who want to learn new skills and techniques. Basically, they perform the same activities that they expect students to do. For example, in the literature project, teachers read difficult works and then analyze them, write about them, and discuss them. They do this for about four weeks. After that, part of the commitment is meeting with colleagues from other schools periodically throughout the year to discuss what they are doing and how it is going. We find that teachers are willing to do this on their own time and that they form little groups that often remain together for a long time.

The subject-matter projects use the California curriculum frameworks and supporting documents as their primary texts. We aim for consistency throughout the state because we think our approach is sound and reflective of a broad consensus among leaders in the field. This does not imply that the activities are scripted or canned. Quite the contrary, each group approaches the material and tasks in unique ways that make sense to them. Only the goal of discovering new and exciting ways to teach the curriculum described in the frameworks is constant.

Tricks and Techniques of Strategic Planning

The actual process of strategic planning and the implementation of the plan are the flip side of the planning model. The model is simple and people make it complex, whereas the planning and implementation are complex and people try to make it simple. Planning and implementation require both sophistication (in educational theory and practice) and thoroughness (in strategy and process). The issues are much more involved than the layperson would imagine.

Simple answers to the complex questions before education are almost always wrong, yet people offer us all sorts of simplistic solutions. They offer us vouchers, or higher teacher salaries, or more skill and drill or technology. One of my favorite simple answers is, the business community is going to solve education's problems by showing us how to run it like a business. Now which business community is that? The unemployed savings and loan executives? The aerospace industry? Commercial real estate? What business community do you know that has solved all of its problems? Come to think of it -- if business has the answer, what is the question?

Technology is another simplistic solution offered for reforming schools. Its proponents seem to think that if we can just get all these kids wired up, that will solve all the problems. Of course, technology is not a bad idea and can be a legitimate part of overall reform, but in and of itself, it does not have a prayer of making any difference. In California, the state spends $13 million a year on technology, and as far as I can tell, it has had no measurable positive effect. Spending $13 million per year on improving teachers' ability to teach a "thinking curriculum" would seem to me to be a lot more cost effective.

Assuming that we acknowledge the complexity of our problems and consequentially the need for detailed planning, I would like to proceed to a

collection of planning tricks and techniques that I have derived over time from my experiences:

Visualize the whole job. If your planning horizon is short, perhaps only a year, you will be more vulnerable to being whipsawed by other people's priorities. When you plan school improvement, think of what it will take to accomplish the entire intervention over five years, ten years, even twenty years. Consider, for example, how long it will take to train every mathematics teacher in your state. Consider available resources, number of teachers, attrition, etc. Setting a definite course promotes more purposeful spending by clarifying what it will take to do the whole job. Then, when additional resources come along, it is possible to funnel them into a strategy that already exists.

Contrast what you want with what is now taking place. I have stressed the importance of communicating the vision for change in specific and concrete terms that inform practice in the classroom, but we have found that it is not enough to tell people exactly what is wanted. You have to explain why what they are already doing is not what is wanted.

I have visited schools where people declare that they have adopted the English language arts framework, but what they are actually doing is portrayed on the right side of Figure 1 (page 9), that is, in the list of ineffective practices. It is human nature to hear about positive characteristics and attribute them to what you are already doing. And creating a program like the one described on the left side of Figure 1 is complex and difficult. If school people do not understand exactly what you want, it is unlikely that they will accomplish the difficult transition from past practices to your new approach. Recent research on techniques for dispelling naive theories held by science students confirms this notion. Textbooks that challenge misperceptions are more effective than those that merely present the correct concept.

Customize descriptions of the vision for various constituencies. We found that we had to customize the message of the framework for different constituencies: teachers, principals, school boards, teacher unions, business, superintendents, teacher educators, SEA staff, parents, and so on. For instance, we produced a version of the English language arts framework for teachers who teach Chapter 1 and migrant classes with high concentrations of limited English proficient students. We also have a parent version of the framework. All contain the same message, but are customized for different audiences. The key requirement in customizing the messages is making sure that the message is consistent and reinforcing, regardless of the audience.

Some audiences require more convincing than others. We found, for example, that teachers of disadvantaged children resisted the notion that their students would profit by reading high-quality literature. Teachers were skeptical because they feared that reading high-quality literature would detract from developing "basic skills." As I mentioned above, we published some documents customized to this type of teacher audience. In addition, the literature project offered summer institutes aimed specifically at Chapter 1 teachers. I would like to report that we have enjoyed broad-based success in changing attitudes of these teachers. But skills-based instruction for disadvantaged students is firmly institutionalized. We have made some notable converts, but much work remains on this front.

Shape the rules. That is, interpret laws and regulations the way they would have been written if those who wrote them had known what they were doing.

For example, when the most recent version of Chapter 1 was reauthorized and we advised the field about the new amendments, our first communication with LEAs on the new law was a long advisory that first

described high-quality programs for disadvantaged students. Following that description we pointed out that Chapter 1 has been revised in ways that encourage designing programs consistent with our advice. For example, it allows for spending Chapter 1 money for staff development for regular classroom teachers who will have eligible students in their classes. You can spend Chapter 1 money to improve eligible students' performance in science, mathematics, and history. We avoided the common approach of explaining the rules: "Here is how much money you get. Here are the forms you complete to get it. Here is what you have to do to avoid an audit exception."

We pushed our interpretation of the law to the limit, but we shaped it in a way that got our message out and supported our strategic vision. We think it is perfectly proper to do so. If you begin with a law -- virtually any law -- and try to design a high-quality program around it, you will never, ever design a good program. You must begin with the program you want and then go to the law and figure out how to take the resources it provides and bring them to bear on elements of your program.

Provide incentives so that people win by delivering the outcomes that you really want. What you ask LEAs to report is exactly what they will pay attention to, so what you pay attention to has ramifications all the way down to the classroom. To get the results you really want, you have to structure incentives such that people are motivated to deliver the results that help realize your vision. This idea seems obvious, but in fact, we almost never pay very close attention to the incentives we build into programs.

For instance, starting back in the 1960's, California had a very popular program called the Demonstration Program in Reading and Math. It was aimed at junior high schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged students. The unique characteristic of this program was that it

required a cost-benefit analysis. The benefit side of the equation was the scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). In other words, what we were paying attention to was performance on a standardized, norm-referenced test limited primarily to measuring lower-level skills. On the basis of this criterion, the least cost-effective schools each year were terminated, and new schools were funded.

We got exactly what we asked for -- schools posted phenomenal gains on the CTBS, in some cases three to five years of growth in both reading and math every year. When we examined the performance of these students using more sophisticated measures, however, we found (as you have undoubtedly guessed) that it is much easier to post gains on a test than it is to improve real learning. The program schools were demonstrating some of the worst possible materials and methodology. They were maximizing students' performance on the test rather than teaching them to read, write and compute.

This program was very popular, especially with legislators, who always love programs that look successful. It took a long fight in the legislature to convince enough people that the program was not only bad, but finely tuned bad. It took three years to kill that program.

We have converted the old program to demonstration programs that work with the subject-matter projects to develop unique ways to teach the curriculum described in the curriculum's frameworks to disadvantaged students. We also have begun to use the California Assessment Program (CAP) writing test as our method of assessing performance.

Target activities as close to the teacher-student interaction as possible. Educators in state agencies are inclined to view administrators at the school site as their primary constituency. Or if it is a Chapter 1 activity, we tend to work with the Chapter 1 project directors. If the activity has to do with vocational education, we rally the vocational

education project directors. Unfortunately, that is not where the payoff is. The highest possible payoff is in the classroom, and if you do not think about the effect of your strategies in that setting, chances are you will get unintended outcomes.

In Chapter 1, for instance, great attention is paid to audits because federal authorities seem to be more concerned about ensuring that we do not serve ineligible students than they are about the program the eligible students get. Because of the focus on audits, we pull students out of class rather than keeping them in class where instructional interventions tend to have a higher payoff. Educators in the local schools continue the pull-out programs even though they do not believe that they are the most efficient and effective way to teach disadvantaged students. They merely are responding to incentives and disincentives they perceive. A more thoughtful targeting of Chapter 1 would provide more emphasis on improving the curriculum and instruction of eligible students and would result in more effective programs and fewer resources wasted on bureaucratic endeavors.

Pull on all the levers. The state department of education is not only *not* the center of the universe, but it is not the only player in school reform. A lot of people see themselves in the exact same business of improving schools. These include textbook publishers, test publishers, parents, school board members, teacher educators, curriculum association members, and many others. Often SEAs do not connect their strategies and interventions with these other players. Of course, you cannot affect all factions everywhere, but you can affect a lot of them. You need all the allies you can muster because there are a lot of entities between you and the classroom teacher.

An informal cost-benefit analysis can help you decide how to direct your efforts. In California, changing teacher pre-service would be

considered a high-payoff lever, but it would be very costly in time and other resources with little probability of success, so we do not spend a lot of our energy on it. Most of the energy we do put in is spent trying to influence the assessment for beginning teachers, which is done through a commission that is not part of the State Department of Education. Parent involvement, on the other hand, is high in payoff and low in cost, so we put considerable energy into that. And, although tests are high in cost, they have a very high payoff, so we have spent a lot of our resources on developing tests and testing systems that reinforce the vision advocated in the frameworks.

Build alliances. When a framework is published in California, its content is no surprise to any relevant constituency. Curriculum associations, administrator associations, textbook and test publishers, and others have all participated in formulating the framework. Participation ranges from serving on writing committees to being afforded opportunities to review and comment on work in progress. For example, the California Association of Teachers of English was instrumental in developing the English language arts framework as were the other relevant curriculum associations on other frameworks. As a consequence, each framework has enjoyed a very positive reception and support from organizations and individuals who feel that they had a part in its creation.

You can create allies and make them more powerful by your actions. Paying attention to them in public increases their status and prestige among their colleagues. Asking them to serve on committees, to become members of accreditation teams or even just visiting their school or classroom are all ways to pay attention. Involvement of this sort anoints these people who are likely to be supportive of the vision for change.

The opposite is also true. If there are recalcitrants who are unwilling to be supportive, just ignore them. Do not make them a part of what is important. As a consequence, you will find that they eventually sign on, particularly after the movement gains momentum and people in various quarters start saying, "This is good stuff."

Such a situation occurred with the history/social science framework. Several social studies educators did not like that framework because, unlike the *status quo*, it accentuates the importance of history and deliberately does not give equal time to psychology, sociology, and anthropology. We tried to work with the proponents of the *status quo*, but we were only moderately successful. Finally we said, "The train is leaving without you." Indeed the train did leave without them. The advocates for a history-centered curriculum prevailed. As the new framework began to receive very favorable reviews from around the country, naysayers became fewer and fewer. Now many of them have set aside their differences and are among our most ardent supporters. And that is fine with us.

Seek a statewide payoff. Through tradition we have been conditioned to think in terms of projects rather than system-wide change. With projects, though, individual schools or districts may obtain some benefit, but when the money dries up the program disappears. You need to begin to think, how are you going to use your scarce resources to lever the entire state? This task is not easy, but it is very important. You want to improve all schools, not just a few.

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In California, we started middle school reform by networking 110 middle schools in one region. Then we added another regional network of 100 schools. Our eventual goal is to influence the entire state. We realize

that this is not going to happen immediately, but this example illustrates the need to plan the job in its entirety. If we want to improve every middle school in our state, we need to lay out the whole task, specifying what it is going to take to complete the task. We need to know how many middle schools there are, how many teachers need to be trained, and therefore what must be done over a period of years. We then phase them in as they indicate readiness and as more resources become available.

We know, for example, that right now in California, we are actually falling behind in the professional development of teachers. In the subject-matter projects, we are training only about 300 teachers a year, yet more than five times that many (16,000) begin teaching in our state annually. So we are losing ground. We know, though, where to put any new money. We (legally) funnel Chapter 1 money, Chapter 2 money, and vocational education money to the subject-matter projects, and in the legislature, we are constantly advocating expansion of these projects.

Use data. We create lots of data in education. We usually do not use it at all, or when we do use it, we do not use it well. We can do better. As an example, let me offer what I will call Smith's Law of Small Numbers. It is, in a way, the obverse of my advice about contemplating the whole task. The reasoning behind this law is that most of the problems we face can be solved by just breaking the problems down into chunks small enough to be manageable by an individual or a school.

A case in point: In California, there are approximately 200 community colleges. Recently, I read that each year, only 200 Black students transfer from community colleges into the University of California. Clearly that rate is abysmal. The typical response from legislators and administrators in the community college system is hand-wringing about the magnitude of the problem. Another response could be that each community college president commit to sending one more Black student to U.C. In

one year that would double the transfer rate. It is inconceivable to me that any community college president could not identify, support, and deliver to U.C. two additional Black students each year. This would triple the transfer rate. Clearly many such huge problems are manageable if we would think of them in these terms.

Data can be important in other ways. Use data to monitor programs, to motivate, to reward, and to sanction. Do not be seduced into believing that averages tell the whole story. Disaggregated data often tell a more compelling story. Average achievement scores may obfuscate widespread failure of minority students in a school with high average achievement scores. Or the opposite may be true as we found in the case of SAT scores. Make data work for you.

Thinking Start to Finish

Figure 2 on pages 30 and 31 summarizes the process and products of the English language arts framework, which is the best developed and most successful framework.

The schematic shows that we have a crystal-clear concept of the kind of instruction we advocate and how we are going to deliver it. The framework is based on a philosophy, and that philosophy is reinforced by all of the supporting products, including professional development projects and assessment. This framework is supported by a long list of implementation documents, projects (like the subject-matter projects), and the alphabet soup of the cooperating associations and related conferences. Finally, the framework evaluation instruments and activities are itemized. If you cannot create a similar model for each initiative you undertake, you have not thought it all the way through.

Remember, the state education agency's role is to lead, not control. Develop and disseminate your vision to the schools, and create the pathways that will take that vision from your offices all the way into the classroom. Without that planning, you will not be as influential as you can be, you will waste a lot of money, and most importantly, you will never release the enormous power of the schools to recast themselves in a new and more effective form. Reform will not last without buy-in from everyone; it is your job to create the vision that makes the payoff worthwhile.

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Sequence Relationships of the Publications and Follow-Up Activities
Prepared by the Language Arts

Philosophical Base for All English-Language Arts Publications and Activities	Guides and Standards to Carry Out Philosophy
English-Language Arts Framework, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve	English-Language Arts Model Curriculum Guide Kindergarten through Grade Eight English-Language Arts Model Curriculum Standards: Grade Nine through Twelve Recommended Reading in Literature, Kindergarten through Grade Eight (unannotated and annotated editions) Recommended Literature, Grade Nine through Twelve Secondary Textbook Review: English Recommended Reading in Spanish, Kindergarten through Grade Eight (in process)

FIGURE 2

California Department of Education's
Activities in English-Language Arts
and Foreign Languages Unit

Implementation Documents, Projects and Activities	Evaluation, Instruments and Activities
Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program Handbook for Planning an Effective Literature Program Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process Recommendation of the Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission: 1986 Adoption Effective Language Arts Programs for Chapter 1 and Migrant Education Students Celebrating the National Reading Initiative The Changing Language Arts Curriculum: A Booklet for Parents California Reading Initiative National Reading Initiative CDE-Sponsored Workshop and Conference California Literature Project California Writing Project California School Leadership Academy California Technology Project Categorical Programs Miller-Unruh Reading Programs Demonstration School Project (Middle School/Junior High) Language Arts/Mathematics Technology Programs (i.e. Model Technology Schools) Instructional Television/Literature -Based Programs California Instructional Video Clearinghouse California Software Clearinghouse CATE, CRA, CMLEA CABLE, and CATESOL Conferences County Office-Sponsored Conference CDE Staff Development Unit and Its Programs Preservice Programs in College and Universities	California Assessment Program Results District Testings Programs and Locally Developed Portfolio Assessment Program Reports for California Schools Program Quality Review for Elementary Schools Program Quality Review for Middle Schools Program Quality Review for High Schools Western Association of Schools and College/State Education Department Joint Process for Accreditation and Program Review *For more information contact:* *California Department of Education* *Language Arts/Foreign Languages Unit* *721 Capitol Mall* *Post Office Box 944272* *Sacramento, California 94244-2720* *(916) 657-3133*